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ABSTRACT

This booklet contains ideas on how to save children's writings and suggests various methods of collecting and displaying them. The first section discusses children as writers and argues that most writing can be the result of personal and classroom or school related experiences when children are free to express their own ideas in relation to their interests, experiences, and activities. The second section discusses how to make a book and provides practical illustrated instructions for simple and complex productions. The third section offers ideas for getting children to write and offers examples of children's writing. (TS)

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Teacher Save My Writings

by Lillian Wexler

illustrated by Cynthia Rountree

CS 202 604

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PREFACE

There are messages in the title of this publication that are very important for teachers and other educators.

First of all, the title implies that children are being encouraged to write something of their own creation in school. Not only does this practice reinforce the child's growth in reading but it leads to the development and organization of his/her thinking skills.

Secondly, when a teacher saves the writings of children, s/he conveys the message that such productions are of value and worthy of being saved which implies that the child him/herself is an important individual and valuable human being.

Readers of this book will find a wealth of ideas on how to save children's writings--on various forms and methods of collecting and displaying them attractively. The importance of displaying children's productions in an aesthetically pleasing manner needs far more emphasis in American schools. The thought and care which should go into the "celebration" of children's writings, whether by framing for the bulleting board, by collecting in a book with an inviting cover, or whatever, carries a message that what the child has accomplished is of recognized importance and therefore deserving of additional time and effort in being pleasingly and appropriately displayed.

Readers of this book will gain many practical ideas that can be put into use right away.

The drawings by Cynthis Roundtree provide attitional clarity to the ideas presented.

We should all be more inspired to carry out the message Lillian Wexler is urging in her title, Teacher Save My Writings.

Virginia R.L. Plunkett
E/K/N/E President
1975

Introduction

Children enjoy communicating, and writing is an integral and essential form of communicating. As young children become aware of the written word they become interested in using this potentially creative form of communication.

From the first thoughts dictated by a child to describe an event in his life experience and/or an illustration he has drawn, the child has a personal and emotional investment in written expression. As this interest is nurtured and grows and the child continues to write (or dictate), the materials may be gathered and bound, producing the child's first book with his name as author.

The "first book" generates much enthusiasm. The author enjoys showing his book and sharing it with others. Children quickly identify with written materials produced by their peers, and show great interest in listening to and reading the books.

Collecting children's writing in some of the ways described in this manuscript has led me down many exciting educational paths with my students. Children have discovered unique ways of employing their skills once they have mastered the notion of making their own books. One youngster decided to make a "wee book" for his

grandmother's Christmas gift and fill it with her favorite poems. Many youngsters have made memory books, autograph albums, individually styled address books, field trip memorabillia albums, and unusual collections of farewell messages from departing friends.

Robert Frost once said, "poetry is just taking the same old words and putting them together in a new way to say something you've been thinking about." Perhaps you will be encouraged to help children put some things together in a new way.

Children As Authors

Why we write

The in-depth understanding of Homo sapiens has come down to us through the ages by means of the pictorial (early man left painted records to communicate his message.) and written symbol. Even in our highly technological and media-oriented age, the pictorial and written symbols continue to be an essential component of the whole communication picture. From exposure, even from infancy for many children, the interrelationship between the spoken word, the picture, and the written word begins to be a part of the modern youngsters storehouse of implicit information.

Children are naturally garrulous and in a warm and accepting atmosphere enjoy telling about their experiences, ideas, feelings, and wishes. Art may be used as the ground experience in expressive activity. Children, given the opportunity, will recreate their talking in painting, drawing, and constructing. The child may then be encouraged to dictate the words, sentence, or story which tells about his picture or object and the relationship between experience and expression begins to be evident. The dictated story develops the relationship between the spoken word and the written word. The child slowly begins to come to the realization, "this

is what I say and this is what it looks like written down." This experience coupled with attention to labels, and signs in parks, buildings, streets and on television which associate pictured products and written symbols, helps in bringing into awareness the recognition that word symbols stand for specific meanings.

As the stories continue to be written down, they can be conveniently gathered and bound into a collection or book. This book is something out of the child's own experience. It is an entity that he is able to deal with as a personal, meaningful-to-self, kind of thing. A child is always having experiences. He is either consciously or unconsciously aware of them. Through recording, he may build on and clarify the experience. It gives both the adult and the child a chance to check perception, and understand with greater clarity and in greater depth how the child perceives that which he has experienced. Writing is a way of making explicit much that is implicit.

Children enjoy sharing each other's written work. Time needs to be systematically set aside for this sharing. Each youngster writes from his individual background on a variety of subjects and experiences which have intense personal meaning for him. He uses vocabulary and language which is unique to his age, social position, and stage of growth and development. This self-chosen vocabulary, story content and means of self-expression is generally deeply meaningful to one's peers. Collections of books written by

children and placed in a class or school library tend to stimulate reading. This kind of reading makes writing come alive. There is great interest on the part of children in reading other children's books. They can identify with this material as dynamic and familiar to themselves. In reading one another's stories the writer may act as a resource person for identifying unknown or unrecognized words.

Along with art, music, dance, and drama, creative writing adds still another dimension to self-expression. It is an opportunity for the individual to reach back into his thoughts and experiences and share his inner self with the world. By writing he is able to express what he thinks and feels. In addition to the creative aspect he is developing a means of communication, an additional way of telling people what he would like them to know.

Most writing can be the result of personal and classroom or school related experiences when children are free to express their own ideas in relation to their interests, experiences and activities, (and the things they are doing.) The group's interest and attention are frequently stimulated by the things which children bring into the classroom to share. Reasonable freedom to explore and deal with others' ideas and belongings stimulates self-expression. There is no substitute for an enriched environment in stimulating children to their greatest potential growth and development. Because individual children see different things as

interesting, a broad variety of interest areas and learning centers is needed. Changed frequently as the interests vary and develop, they are most effective in getting children to want to write. Field trips, interesting visitors from the community, parents with particular skills or hobbies, may be available. (Become aware of and sensitive to the total human and physical environment in which you find yourself and explore and utilize it to its full potential.) Youngsters need to have exciting things happening to stimulate writing.

Beginning writing flourishes best where it is nurtured and encouraged. The classroom atmosphere in which there is reasonable freedom to explore and deal with one's skin-in, skin-out environment provides the most desirable atmosphere for creative writing. It is important to note that an atmosphere of freedom as discussed here is one where the freedom carries with it a sense of responsibility to self and others, where freedom implies doing what you need to do to move yourself ahead and not just what you want to do to gratify a whim of the moment regardless of consequences. Children need to continue to work on self-direction, choice and decision making, and developing responsibility appropriate to their individual age, maturity and personal stage of growth and development. This is an ongoing, step by step process throughout the child's school career.

In the beginning writing may be done informally and is best accepted for the thoughts expressed. Children's writing at this

stage, like art, ought not to be red-pencilled, corrected, changed, or otherwise defaced. When it is not assigned, but done as individual projects which are recognized and appreciated, further writing is encouraged. If, from the very beginning, writing for the sake of communication is encouraged the technical aspects become necessary and rational in the eyes of the child because he wants very much to be understood. As the need for punctuation, spelling and other writing technicalities arises, instruction on an individual or small group basis may begin. With children in the intermediate grades it is often possible to set up student assistants in the classroom who have special interests and skills and can act as proof-readers or editors in helping others polish their writing.

The whole concept of authorship enters into this matter of creative writing and collecting it into books. Through the grades it can progressively provide a rationale for polishing the written materials which a child feels are worth keeping. If children investigate the way in which authors write they will learn about outlines or preliminary notes, in the head or on paper, first drafts, rewrites, until the author is satisfied. This identification with authorship, and the need to have others understand and get meaning from the writing provide a real and acceptable reason for improving writing and observing the mechanics.

Writing is a skill which has observable value. Parents are pleased when their children are able to put their thoughts into

written form. Many have commented at the ease with which eight and nine year olds who have been writing, can get their ideas down on paper. Child produced material in a class or central school library is an excellent supplement to commercially produced material. The children's stories are often more relevant to the other students. They also provide material at easily read levels for children who can profit from it. The personal self-concept of the "author" is enhanced and it also gives the other children ideas and confidence in exploring writing. It is deeply satisfying to be able to communicate effectively and most especially to see the message in writing.

How to make a book...
from the simple
to the complex.

Accordian or Fold-out Book

use:

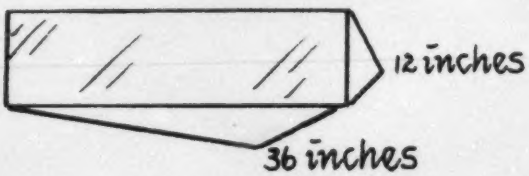
1. to give direction for making or building something; i.e., recipe, model.
2. to describe a personal experience; i.e., accident, birthday, new baby, etc.
3. to make a comic strip of events.
4. to report a current event.

materials:

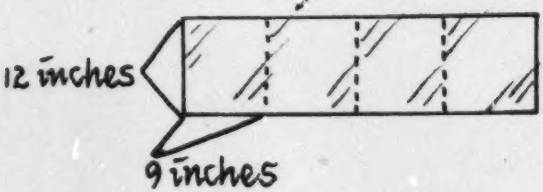
tag board or oak board

procedure:

1. cut tag board into 12"x36" strips.



2. accordian fold into 9"x 12" panels.



3. attach additional strips with masking tape to provide as many frames as needed.

Fold and Staple Book

use:

1. Personal dictionary or word book. The student writes one letter of the alphabet on each page, whenever he needs the teacher's help in spelling a word, he brings the book to the teacher or another child. He is directed to bring the book opened to the appropriate page for the first letter of the word. This is also good training for auditory discrimination of initial sounds. As each page begins to fill the child needs to check to see if he has the word already written before requesting help.

2. Picture dictionary. Write one letter of the alphabet on each page. Cut and paste pictures on each page that begin with that letter of the alphabet.

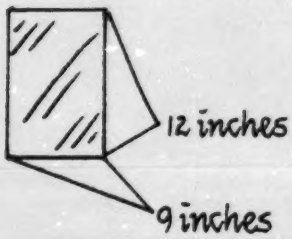
3. Animal dictionary. (use appropriate illustration on each page)

4. Flower dictionary. (use appropriate illustration on each page)

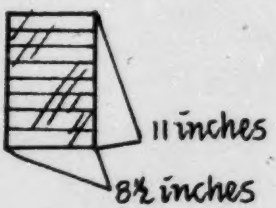
5. Football dictionary. (use appropriate illustration on each page)

materials:

1. 9" × 12" colored construction paper.



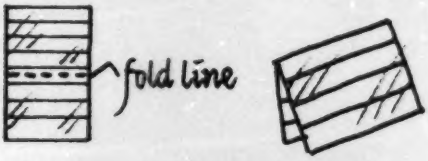
2. 8½" × 11" lined paper.



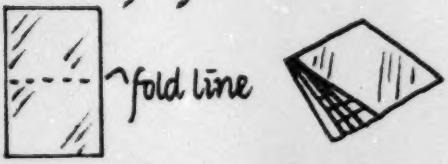
3. stapler (long-throat)

procedure:

1. Fold lined paper in half using as many sheets as desired.



2. Fold a sheet of construction paper in half and place on the outside of lined paper as a cover.



3. Use a long-throat stapler, unfold all the pages and staple down the middle on the fold. This provides a flat, smooth surface to work on, and the book opens and closes easily.

Slim Jims Book

use:

Poetry collection

Library list

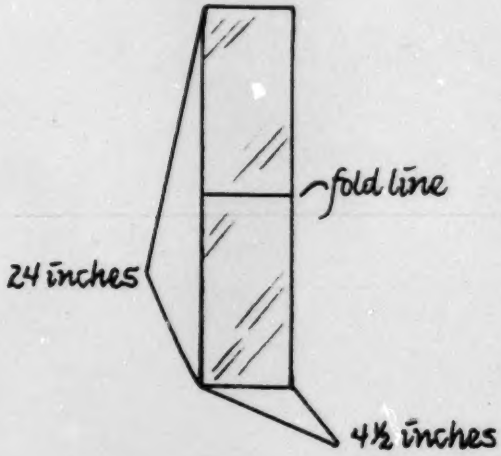
Write tall tales

materials:

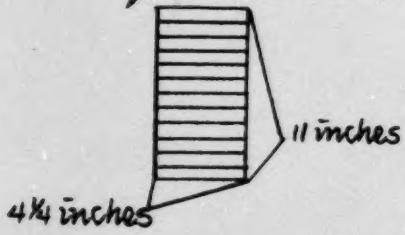
1. construction paper
2. lined writing paper
3. stapler

procedure:

1. cut construction paper into strips 4½" × 24"

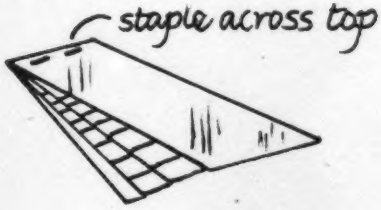


2. cut lined writing paper into 4¼"×11" strips.



3. fold construction paper over lined paper to form cover

4. staple across the top



Shaped Books

use:

1. Write stories about the subject related to the shape of the book.
2. Write or collect poems related to the shape of the book.
3. Gather factual information as it relates to the shape of the book.

materials:

1. a variety of papers
2. hole punch
3. brass fasteners
4. yarn
5. raffia
6. staples

procedure:

1. make a pattern for the shape of your book; girl, boy, circle, diamond, animal (owl, fish, cat, rabbit, etc.), flower.
2. use the pattern to cut a set of pages for your book.
3. decide how you want to fasten your book a) staple b) punch a hole and use brass fasteners.
4. sew with yarn or raffia.

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Sew a Book

use:

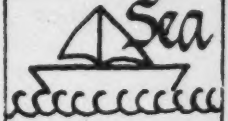
1. social studies - collect information on the subject you are studying and arrange it in the book.
2. science - collect materials, describe experiments, draw diagrams and assemble in a book.
3. health and safety - keep information gathered and original materials in your book.
4. poems - write original poems, collect poems, write poems dealing with seasons or special subjects in your book.

5. stories ~ use it to keep the stories you write.

6. diary ~ make entries of important or significant events.

7. homonyms (or any part of language you may be studying) use each page to write a set of homonyms, write a sentence using the words to illustrate.

example

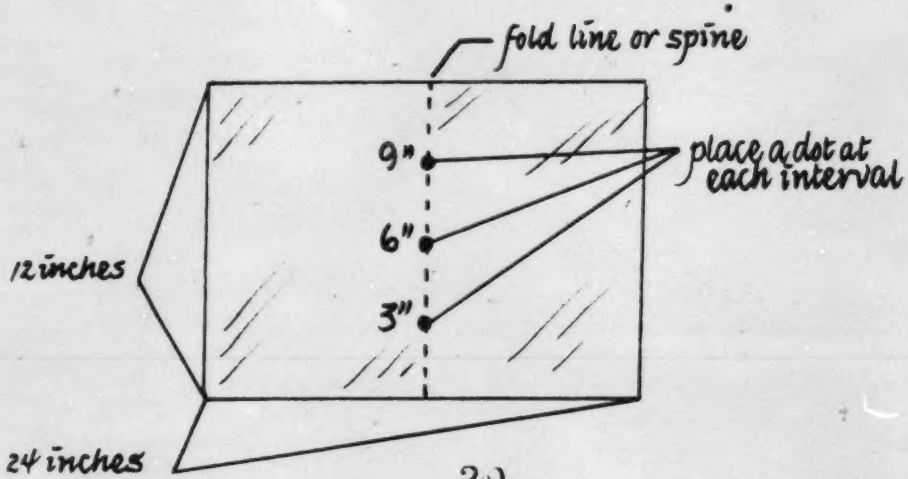
See	Sea
	
I have eyes to see with.	The boat went sailing the sea.

materials:

1. a variety of papers (newsprint, construction paper, writing paper, drawing paper, etc.)
2. large eye darning needle
3. yarn, raffia

procedure:

1. Choose one of the heavier papers as a cover ~ fold it in half.
2. Decide how many pages you want to have in your book, count out papers, fold them in half and place them inside the cover.
3. Measure along the spine or fold and divide into four equal parts, placing a dot at each interval.



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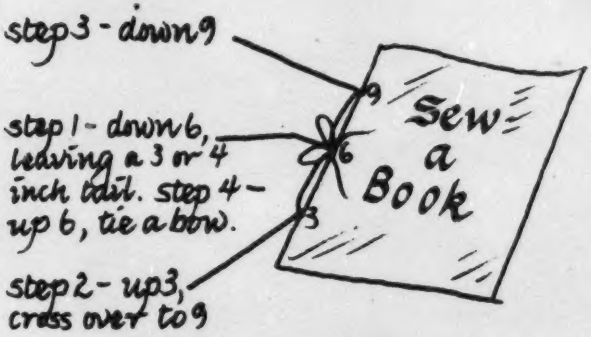
4. With a threaded needle, beginning on the outside, sew through the center dot leaving a 3 or 4 inch tail on the outside. Come up from the center through one of the end dots. Cross on the outside over to the inside. Come up through the middle, knot the ends of the yarn, then tie in a bow.

{down 6, up 3, down 9, up 6}



Children's writing may be collected in a variety of ways. This chapter outlines a sampling that has been used successfully with students throughout the elementary and junior high school years.

What do we write about?

Now that we have so many exciting and unusual ways for students to collect their work, how about some notions of things to write about?

Each child brings a rich heritage to school. Give the child a chance to explore. Use every opportunity for oral language in which children talk about their experiences and the things which interest them. Accent the positive! Investigate the things done best, the favorite pastimes, the toy they play with most, their special pet, things they have made. Stimulate their thinking about the written word by reading aloud. Don't limit what you read--try poetry, newspaper articles, short stories, fairy tales, tall tales, myths, in addition to story books.

All children want to learn and are generally willing to work at acquiring skills. The learning is so much more efficient and effective when children are able to relate what they are learning to what they already know. Part of the teacher's job is to help the student make the connection--to establish the relatedness, the sense of pattern and wholeness. Invite children to write about the world as they know it--to see a chance to have their own talk written down. Use the real, the concrete, the familiar things in the youngster's life as a starting point. They then can move from the personal to the abstract in all areas.

Whenever a child writes something down consider it a personal manuscript. Never make a mark on a personal manuscript. You can do some things before the writing begins that may avoid pitfalls. Have the children talk about words that will be relevant to the writing they are going to do. Make some charts or lists that will remain readily accessible of adjectives, adverbs, holiday words, alternative words. Suggest the use of a class editor to help with the proof reading and correcting process. Encourage children to share their writing by reading it aloud. Students will frequently discover their own inaccuracies--omitted words, run-on sentences, need for punctuation, as they read their work orally.

The teacher can help to raise the child's level of aspiration by setting the atmosphere. The more enriched the classroom environment, the more viable choices made available to each learner, the greater the growth and development of each individual. Recognize that children generally act more spontaneously than adults. Things are perceived anew and described in unique and original ways by the child. There is real personal and emotional satisfaction in bringing feelings and thoughts close to a child's heart to the surface and releasing them in writing. As the child expresses himself he is helped to grow and fulfill himself as a person.

About Toys...

The Best Toy

The best toy that I got was a Campbell kid doll. I carry it allmost everywhere! I sleep with it. I play house with it. And it

has a red dress. She came in a box. And her name is Tina.

Leslie Age 7

My Best Presents

One Christmas I got a shirt, pajamas, G.I. Joe, gear box, a model. But the thing I like the most is my Walkie Talkie. My two brothers got one too and we go outside and play with them. It is fun to play with Walkie Talkies.

Neal Age 8

About People...

Our Visitor

Our visitor was so nice. She helped us a lot. She was like a teacher because she wanted us to draw a picture of what we dreamed of. It was nice of her to come to our room. I think she liked it here and I think she thot we were a quiet class. I wish we had her to come over to our class again. We liked it when she came over. It was fun.

Brian Age 8

Our Visitor

Our visitor's name was Kyra. She was very nice. Kyra was pretty too. Kyra goes to college. I like her. She let us make pictures of our dreams.

Mary Age 8

The Substitute Teacher

The substitute teacher was nice but when everybody talked she got mad. Later she got nicer and nicer. Then she told everybody that once she got mad at some kidniegardeners because they wouldn't

do anything. Later when it got close to going home time she read us a story. Then she dismist everybody.

Dean Age 9

Science Fiction...

How People Walk Backwards

One day in backwards land a scientist made a rocket. He got into the rocket and blasted off. After a few days in space the scientist landed in Canada. The scientist taut the Canadians how to walk backwards. The Canadians taut the Americans how to walk backwards. And pretty soon the whole world knew how to walk backwards.

Neal Age 8

Seasons, Weather & Holidays...

The Thunderstorm

One day a boy was walking his dog. When he put his back to his dog the dog ran away. Then the boy turned back and did not see his dog. So he went to find his dog and then it started to rain. But he kept on looking for his dog. He kept calling him. Finelee they ran into each other.

Lisa Age 8

What I'm Thankful For

I am thankful for the turkey on Thanksgiving. I am thankful for my pets. I am thankful for my home. I am thankful for our school. I am thankful for our food to keep me alive. I am thankful for my best friend. I am thankful for my teacher. I am thankful for my Bike. I am thankful for I am in Story Caravan. I am thankful for

my name

John Age 8

December

I like the month of December. Christmas is in it and my birthday is in December. Sometimes it snows in December. I get more presents in December than my brother. In December I am broke because I have to spend my own money on the presents I give my family.

Jean Age 5

The Two Angels

Once upon a time two little angels were picking golden rocks up. When all of the rocks were picked up, they went back to the castle! And put them by the throne of God

The end!

Leslie Age 7

About Pets and Animals...

The Happy Hamsters

Once upon a time there was a mother. She had babies. She had about 15 babies. That is a lot. She had to take care of them. She gave them a bath or shower. She fed them food. It seemed like the baby hamsters ate a lot. Probably the hamsters do eat a lot but the mother gave them food to eat when it was time. The hamsters fited a lot. The mother did not like that to well. She stop the play fiteing. The children played with the hamsters. The children sold the baby hamsters.

Judy Age 8

New Born Puppy

When a puppy is born they're covered with plastic. The mother has to bite through the plastic to get the puppy out and she has to bite through the puppy's cord to save the puppy. The puppy is furry when it is born. The puppy is cute when it is born.

Chris Age 8

Choose a Picture...

(Use old magazines, your picture file, or any other source for pictures which stimulate writing. Allow the children sufficient time to select a picture which appeals to them. If possible let them include the picture with the writing.)

A Lady Named Jill

Once upon a time there was a lady. She had no mother or father because she ran away. She only had one friend and her name was Cathy. She was very nice to her. We are very nice to each other. One day when she woke up there was a man. He had a knife in his hand. He was going to kill her but she got away. She ran and she ran. Then Jill looked back. He was gone. So she stopped to rest. When she looked back again there was the man again. She got up. She started to run but she tripped and the man got her. Then the man put down the knife and kissed her. Then the man told her his name. He is hans. Then she told her name. Her name was Jill. Then they loved each other for a long time. Then Jill found Cathy and told her she was getting married.

Cathy Age 8

How a Woman Got to be a Good Cook

Once there was a girl that met a man. They both fell in love and got married. The woman's name was Janet. But she didn't know how to cook. So she took cooking lesens. But still she didn't know how to cook. Her husband's name was Kenney. They went out every night. One night Kenney invited his folks over. But she didn't know how to cook. Kenney didn't know she didn't know how to cook. When Kenney came home and found out she didn't know how to cook he said that she would have to learn how to cook VERY FAST. He said to go to the store and get some peaches and strawberries and grapes Kenney told her what to do and left. Janet put the frosting in first then the fruit. She put it in the oven. She turned it on and didn't set the timer and it didn't burn but she got there just in time. Kenney came home. Janet said, "did I do it right, Kenney?" Kenney said, "No, but that's how you learn. But let me taste it. It is very good." His folks liked it too. Everybody liked it and so it went in the magazines. She got a whole bunch of cook books and she knew how to cook better.

Crystal Age 8

The Camera

The boy had a camera and on the Fourth of July he had a full load of film he took a lot of pictures and they turned out good.

Mike Age 8

The Ravioli Smile

This man is haveing Ravioli for dinner. He is happy. The other

people are happy too. They are haveing Ravioli too. I think Ravioli is good. My Mom makes it too. My Mom likes it too. This man likes Ravioli he is smileing

Chris Age 8

Create a Situation...

You are walking down a long dark passageway. There seems to be a golden glow coming from the distance. When you get there you find a small chest full of shiny, golden pills. The message on the chest says, "Take One---Quickly."

When I was little I found a box full of golden pills. I went to ask my mom what they were. But she sed that she didn't know what they were. She sed not to take eny. But I did. I took one. I took a little one. Then I felt very funny and then I grew very tall. I got scared so I took a second one. Then I grew very small and then I almost got stepped on. So I took a square one and then I turned into a fish and then I stayed like that. the End

Kathy Age 9

One time my mom wanted to go to the store and leave us home. When she left we started fighting. Before she left she put a chest in the back yard. Then my brother chased me into the back yard and I saw the chest and on the chest there was a sign that said "take one of these pills fast." Then I took one and I grew up taller then my dad and I scared my brother half to death and he never picked on me again.

Dean Age 8

Once I found a beautiful chest out in the woods. So I brought it home. My mom was out for the day. I didn't think that she would mind. When I got home so I opened it and I found a sign saying

Take one Quickly

. So I took one of the golden pills and I turned into a princess. So I went and looked in the mirror. I had a beautiful dress made of silver and gold. I couldn't wait I saw so I went and took another one. And then I turned into a witch then I took another quickly and I turned back into myself. So I ran with the chest and I put it back where I found it then I ran in my house.

Ann Age 8

Poems...

Some poems by their nature lend themselves to a story response. The following poem is one that children have enjoyed responding to

I Keep Three Wishes Ready

I kẽep three wishes ready,
Lest I should chance to meet,
Any day a fairy
Coming down the street.

I'd hate to have to stammer,
Or to have to think them out,
For it's very hard to think things up
When a fairy is about.

And I'd hate to lose my wishes,
For fairies fly away,
And perhaps I'd never have a chance
On any other day

So I keep three wishes ready,
Lest I should chance to meet,
Any day a fairy
Coming down the street.

-- Annette Wyne

Movies--films--slides...

A number of things listed in an audiovisual materials catalog are effective stimulants to creative writing. Many guidance films present a problem situation and leave the reaching of a solution to the audience. Films dealing with such things as honesty, stealing, tattling, or peer relations may be used. After the film is shown the group offers ideas and opinions. Individuals are then given the opportunity to write their own ideas of the way they think the problem is best solved.

There is a group of films which tells a story without using words. The story, usually highly dramatic, unfolds in action in the film with stirring background music. It is fun to tell the story in words and then write and illustrate it. The following films, all in color, have worked well for this activity.

The Golden Fish	20 min	Columbia Picture Corp.
The Clown	15 min	Learning Corporation
The Merry-Go-Round Horse	17 min	Learning Corporation
The Magic Balloons	16 min	Learning Corporation
Magic Moments -- 20 titles in four series -- Let's Talk, Let's Do, Let's See, Let's Pretend	2-8 min	Encyclopedia Britanica Press

Let's Pretend...

Many writing opportunities are the result of giving your imagination free reign! Just suppose some everyday non-human objects suddenly found themselves with human characteristics? How would they respond? Where might they lead? What adventure could follow?

Try:

Articles of clothing

hat, coat, scarf, gloves, tennis shoes

Toys and playthings

bicycle, kite, doll, truck

Sporting equipment

bat, football, skis

Pets and animals

birds, dogs, cats, zoo animals, jungle animals

Things in nature

flowers, trees, grass

Diaries...

Diaries are fun to keep. In addition to the commonly accepted one where daily events are recorded, many other possibilities exist. Consider:

Pretend you are a character of long ago. Write your diary recording important events of the time in which you lived.

In trying to resolve a conflict, instruct children to write what each perceives has happened. Let them compare notes. This encourages children to become more observant and to see situations from another's point of view.

Letters...

The skill of communicating with others through letters is a useful one to acquire early in life. Many real opportunities for writing exist. Think about the many people and services that touch your life and those of your students, then consider sending a letter to:

The cafeteria manager on a day when the meal was particularly good.

The librarian when you enjoyed the read-aloud story.

The custodian for keeping your room and school in such good condition.

The room mother who helped with a room party or field trip.

Children in another class who have prepared and presented an assembly.

A favorite athlete who is ill, or just scored high in a recent game.

A favorite author telling which of his books you have enjoyed and why.

Parodies...

Children are familiar with and enjoy writing parodies on well known songs. One most commonly used is Battle Hymn of the Republic. One of my favorites was written by a Third Grade group to the tune of On Top of Old Smokey. It went

"On top of Mt. Wexler, all covered with work...." I'm afraid I didn't reduce the work load; however, I did get the message.

Peggy Brogan encourages teachers to invite children to borrow the pattern of an author's language and hang their own experience on it. It is her belief that "if you own one sentence you own five million." She enjoys using

Brown Bear, Brown Bear
What do you see?"[1]

which was parodied by one youngster

Hamburger, hamburger
What do you see?
I see the french fries
Looking at me.

---

[1]Bill Martin Instant Reader, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.

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